

RELIGION AND MAGIC

261

demon, who can be bought off with bribes of food and money, to make him release the victim's spirit and then leave.

If neither the supernatural efforts of the *t'iao t'ung* and the *sa shih* nor the medical efforts of a doctor produce a cure, the family may conclude that the supernatural causes of the illness require more than medical or magical means. Recognizing the inadequacy of man and shaman in the situation, they are forced to decide that it is necessary to appeal to the gods for help. The family then asks the entire village to sacrifice to the gods in the hope that they may intervene in behalf of the sick person. If even this effort fails and the patient dies, the villagers then conclude that the person was "fated to die at this time." While one informant noted that "Fate is a person's explanation of what has already happened," most villagers feel that "a person is fated to die at a certain time and the gods can do little to control or change that fate. If the person becomes ill when he is due to die, it is no use to call a *t'iao t'ung*. That person's life is already full and so there is nothing that can be done to make his life longer. If the gods could save those who are fated to die, then later there would be so many people that people would eat people."

A Case in Point

During my stay in Hsin Hsing village, I witnessed a case in which a family used Western- and Chinese-style doctors, several *t'iao t'ung* and *sa shih*, and eventually a joint village *pai-pai* to the gods in order to cure a sick member of the family. The family's twenty-year-old daughter had displayed signs of insanity over a period of several years. When she was disturbed she was subject to attacks of extreme depression accompanied by brief, but sudden, outbursts of intense crying, screaming, and cursing. When anyone, including her parents, attempted to quiet her, she would strike out at them wildly. For weeks at a time, the girl could scarcely perform her ordinary duties. Then her aberration would pass and for several months or nearly a year the girl would behave normally until she was taken with another attack.

The first of these attacks took place while the girl was living in Taipei, where she kept house for her father who worked there. The girl's mother and other siblings were living in the village, working the family's small piece of land. When the girl first became disturbed, a Western-style and then a Chinese-style doctor were called in to treat her. When they were unable to help, a master *sa shih* was called in and, according to the villagers, cured the girl completely. However, the *sa shih* became angry when he was not given enough money as a reward for his aid. The family and villagers feel that as a result he put a curse on the girl and that since that time she has suffered these intermittent attacks.

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